The Way It Was

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UNIT: Co. L, 27th Infantry, Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon
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Q: How did you come to enter the Army?

JP: During the first years of the war, I was attending High School in Cleveland, Ohio. The draft was in effect at the time. I registered and was given a number. You were called up for duty when your number came up. There were no direct enlistments at the time, you had to go through the draft.

Q: How long did it take the government to draft you after you registered?

JP: Well, it was about six months. In early February 1943 I registered and in June I got my pre-induction notice. It was generally two to three weeks after the pre-induction that you were notified to report to camp.

Q: How thorough was the physical examination?

JP: Doctors listened to your heart and there were some psychological tests they gave to see if you were fit. There was no extensive testing that I can think of. They would say that as long as you could move and answer questions, you passed it.

Q: Where did you go after the physical examination was completed?

JP: You went back home and then you got your notice in the mail to report for the induction ceremonies back down at the Armory. For the induction ceremony, we were lined up in a room and the Officer in Charge came in and administered the oath. They made it into a big deal, they had a number of officers there. After that you left right from the Armory to

the train station. From there we left Cleveland for Fort Hayes at Columbus, Ohio. Down there was further physical testing, shots, issuing uniforms and things like that

Q: Where did you go for further training?

JP: In my case, it was Camp Croft in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Basic training there lasted 18 weeks. It was regular recruit training, close order drill qualifying with your basic infantry weapon and squad level maneuvers. After this, I was sent to the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) school. It was basically advanced infantry training with a lot of patrolling. Map reading, compass work and so forth. That lasted until early February 1944.

Q: Was your Basic Training adequate?

JP: I thought they did a good job, especially in qualifying us with weapons. I don't think there was enough time for squad and platoon tactics. I was always glad that I went to the 25th Infantry Division (Tropic Lightening) after they got back from their campaigns in the Solomons to reform and retrain. That gave me the chance to get more experience in tactics. It would have been pretty tough to go right from Basic Training to a company or a platoon already in combat without any further training.

Q: How did you find out you were going overseas?

JP: You got orders at the end of the training cycle that you were to ship out. You also got a ten-day furlough. At that time, overseas orders were almost exclusively to the Pacific Theater. We first went to Camp Stoneman in Pittsburg, California near San Francisco. That's when they started censorship of your mail and we were cut off from all phone calls. We were then sent down the Sacramento River to San Francisco where we boarded our transport.

Q: What was your transport like?

JP: It was an old Dutch tramp steamer that had plied the island in the Dutch East Indies. They had escaped just ahead of the Japanese Navy. The crew were all Indonesians who couldn't speak English. The captain and the first mate were Dutch. The ship was armed with a five-inch gun with a Marine crew. It was really a tub! We got on board in the evening and started out early the next morning. For the first day and a half a blimp flew overhead on submarine patrol. There was no naval escort, we were strictly on our own. I think there were about 2500 to 3000 men on the ship. There didn't seem to be enough lifeboats for us. We all had life vests that you had to wear all the time. There was one kitchen set up on the stern so we had to eat in shifts.

Q: How was the food?

JP: Well, if you weren't seasick, you could eat it. So many were seasick that for along time out, we really didn't care to eat it. It was about 34 days from San Francisco to Noumea, New Caledonia. We dropped south and then west almost to New Zealand and then back up north. We skirted the bulk of the islands that the Japanese had in the Central Pacific. There were no real submarine scares that we knew of, but every morning at sunup and every evening at sundown, we stood submarine alert. Everybody was up on deck until it was dark. Apparently, those were the times the submarines chose to go after shipping. Perhaps that was because the ships were silhouetted against the sun.

Q: How did you feel about going to the Pacific?

JP: I wanted to go to the Pacific. For one thing, the 37th (Buckeye) Division was over there and my brother, Bob, was assigned there. Also, at that time we had more feeling against the Japanese than for the Germans because of Pearl Harbor and Bataan.

Q: What happened when you got to Noumea?

JP: We pulled right in and then we unloaded, got on trucks and went to the Replacement Depot. They set you up in tents and right away assigned you duties. Then when they got a call for so many men to go to different outfits, they would send them out from there. In the meantime, they did more testing, work with basic weapons and so on. You also pulled KP, guard duty and whatever they had going. Once I had to guard American prisoners at the stockade. They had the main stockade for the Pacific area there for all the hard cases. There were about 200-300 in the stockade, most of them were there for insubordination and desertion and I suppose fighting with Officers and NCO's. Out of the Replacement Depot, I was assigned to the 27th Infantry Regiment (Wolfhounds) of the 25th Infantry Division. They loaded us on trucks and took us to our units. I started out with L Company. I was assigned as a B.A.R. man (Browning Automatic Rifle). On our first payday, the First Sergeant called four of us out of the payday formation and told us to report to the Battalion Headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment. We were going to the patrolling school. It was an outfit all of its own in a different section away from the other battalions. They had troops from all three battalions in a reconnaissance training section. Captain Kuntz, a veteran of Guadalcanal, was the head of it. He explained what it was going to entail. You had the option to go back to your original company if you didn't want to get into that type of patrolling or reconnaissance work. I stayed because it sounded interesting. It sounded a lot better than a rifle company. A rifle company is a tough deal, then and now, I think. Frontal assaults by that time did not appeal to me much.

Q: What other training did you have at this school?

JP: There was a lot of map reading and compass work and learning to sketch route maps and terrain features. In addition to classroom work, you'd put it into practice. They'd put you in trucks at night and dump you of somewhere in either 3 or 6 man teams. You'd have to find your way back while making route maps. Sometimes they'd give you a destination

and you'd make maps along the way. The patrols lasted anywhere from overnight to a week or ten days. Also, there was further work with our weapons.

Q: What other training did you have?

JP: After graduating from Recon School, we went back to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry to do squad, platoon, company, battalion and even regimental maneuvers. A part of the training, a good part of it, was amphibious training. We had practice landings where we spent two weeks on an English transport ship making landings every day. The platoon I was assigned to was called the Intelligence and Reconnaissance (I&R) platoon. The platoon was a combination of an Antitank Section and the Intelligence and Reconnaissance section. We normally operated separately, but we scouts did some work with the antitank guns. There were two squads of 12 men in the I&R Section with a Lieutenant and Platoon Sergeant in the Platoon Headquarters. In the Antitank Section, there was a section Sergeant and 12 men serving two 37mm antitank guns one per squad.

Q: How old ere the members of the I&R Platoon?

JP: Well, I know there were two of them, Steve McDonough and Lottie Hill, they were 36 and 37, they were the oldest. I think the youngest were just 18, almost 19. I think the bulk of the platoon were replacements/draftees outside of the NonComs and three or four of the privates in the Antitank Section.

Q: How where your patrols organized?

JP: Usually on a recon patrol, we would take half a squad of six men. Sometimes it would only take three, but mostly it was six. On a combat patrol we would take a full squad of twelve. There was always one guy as the point man. It was his job to precede the patrol and make the first contact. Normally, it seemed that the same guy was always picked to be the point man although it was up to the patrol leader as to who would be point. Normally, the point man and the second man in the file would trade places during the patrol. One guy was called the anchorman. His job was to cover the patrol as it crossed an open area. The ammunition/pioneer platoon in the battalion headquarters carried special weapons like flame-throwers and bangalore torpedoes. We drew those special weapons with operators when we needed them, but there were only a few occasions we had to do that. Normally, we relied on basic infantry weapons such as the M1 (Garand) rifles. When we first went into combat, the point man had this submachine gun we called the "grease gun" (M3 Submachine Gun.) That didn't last very long. Everyone ended up carrying the M1 Garand or the M1 carbine rather than carry that. The grease gun used up ammunition too fast and it sounded too much like a Japanese Nambu light machine gun. If you were up a trail in the jungle and fired the grease gun, it would draw too much fire from both sides. Everyone would be looking to get that weapon once they heard it. Besides everything else, it wasn't even accurate. It was probably all right for close in fighting, but for our purposes, even the M1 carbine was better than the grease gun. I

carried the M1 Garand rifle. I usually tried to carry three units of fire for it. That made 240 rounds or thirty clips of M1 ammunition. I also carried two, three or four grenades, whatever you could get. We carried two canteens of water and one day's rations.

Q: When did the training on New Caledonia end?

JP: I got there at the end of February or the beginning of March 1944. In the latter part of October 1944 it came down that we were going to invade an island off the coast of New Guinea called Halmahera. We had the vehicles roped down, struck the tents, moved into pup tents, and were issued new clothes. At the last minute, just as we were getting ready to get on the trucks, they canceled the whole thing. In late November 1944, we got the word that we were to get ready to ship out. We didn't know then that it was going to be the Philippines. We got on trucks and went down to the nickel docks at Noumea to board the ships. We headed north and had practice landings on the beaches of Guadalcanal. We spent some time before Christmas on the coconut plantations there. I think it was period to get acclimatized. We took off again and spent Christmas off Florida Island's Purvis bay. After Christmas, we took off again and headed north and anchored at Ulithi. They had recreation for us there. There were parties and we spent the day on the beach. In that time, on board ship, it came down that we were scheduled to make a landing in Lingayen Gulf on Luzon.

Q: What were your feelings about returning to the Philippines?

JP: I suppose everybody hoped it would be there, especially since the Army had already gone into Leyte. Luzon was the next step. I think everybody wanted to invade Luzon, especially since they still had prisoners there from Bataan and Manila.

Q: What was the landing like?

JP: It wasn't very exciting. It was virtually unopposed, although we didn't know it would be that way. We left Ulithi with 400 ships in our convoy alone. The other convoys with the 37th Infantry, 1st Cavalry and 41st Infantry Divisions, I think, made the initial landings the day before we did. This made things really crowded in Lingayen Gulf. They had worked the beach over thoroughly with cruisers, battleships, and air power. I don't think there was a palm tree there with a frond left. When we landed, there was a bunch of Filipinos waving us in.

Q: What did your Regiment do during the Luzon Campaign?

JP: After the landing at Lingayen, our primary mission in the Central Plains of Luzon was to protect the flank of 1st Cavalry and 37th Infantry Divisions' run to Manila. They landed and took off for Manila. I think the high command was afraid that if they didn't have their flanks protected, the Japanese would come out of the mountains and would catch the forces going down to Manila from behind. What we did was to cut the island in two. We did this to protect the troops going down to Manila and to stop the retreat of the bulk of

the Japanese into the mountains in the northern part of the island. Once we cut the island in two, we were to go north and pursue Yamashita's headquarters. Our final objective was Balete Pass and the town of Santa Fe on the other side of the Pass. We were to keep pressure on the Japanese, to support the 32nd (Red Arrow) Division attacking out of San Manuel and San Quentin on what we called the Villa Verde Trail. The Villa Verde Trail went up through the mountains from Baguio and ended up in Santa Fe. However, the 32nd Division got up into their pass and couldn't dislodge the Japanese. Because of this, they changed the 25th Infantry Division's mission. Instead of maintaining pressure on the Japanese, we were to take Balete Pass and Santa Fe.

Q: What kind of missions were you assigned?

JP: Mostly route reconnaissance, also to bring back information from towns that weren't occupied yet and to recon areas like the far side of a rice paddy. Also, we reconned river crossing sites and looked for the best routes to bring up trucks. About three weeks after the landings, we began to hit opposition. Our job was to set up trail blocks, river blocks and conduct combat patrols.

Q: How fast did you patrol?

JP: We traveled at a real slow walk, just a little bit at a time making sure we checked everything out. Most of the time, in the mountains, you couldn't see more than five or ten yards off the trail you were on. You had to check everything twice. During training, they used to tell us we should "bull ahead" aggressively to find the enemy with the fastest, most direct methods. Well, we didn't do that. The guy who thought up that tactic should have tried it himself! It's a different story when you're out there faced with a real enemy with real weapons. When we were on patrol, we went out there and did what we were supposed to do. We did the job, but we did it at our own pace.

Q: How did you feel about your leaders?

JP: Everyone thought the platoon leader was a little bit radical. He wouldn't ask anyone to do anything he wouldn't do himself. He had some far out ideas. In fact, he got relieved in the first week we were operating. The first patrol we went on was about 1000 to 1500 yards out. We were to check out the Agno River. We were to check out the bank. There was nothing in the order about crossing over the Agno. I don't know if he got excited or what, but we found nothing on the one bank so we crossed over and reconned another 200-300 yards farther than we were supposed to. As it was, we didn't hit anything, but he didn't carry out the mission as it was laid out so they relieved him. I suppose the river was 30 yards at it's widest point, not very deep but it was all in the open. If we had run into anything, we wouldn't have gotten any help. He felt bad, he thought he did a good job but that wasn't what he was told to do.

Q: Did you see any General Officers?

JP: Down on the Central Plains outside of San Manuel we saw MacArthur from a distance. We were on patrol and we came up on him. He was in a jeep with his Filipino bodyguards. He was across the rice paddy and he didn't see us with his guards, we didn't go over to him. He looked like he was all alone. Then, one time in Balete Pass we saw General Stilwell, Vinegar Joe. Of course, Krueger from Sixth Army was there with Stilwell.

Q: Did the I&R Platoon perform any unusual missions?

JP: Once, in the mountains, we were sent out to pick up a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot who had bailed out. He was about 3500 yards or so out in a valley area. He was as happy as hell when we found him! Although we knew where his plane went down because of the smoke, it was pretty hard to find where he actually landed. Other special missions included accompanying tanks into the hills. We were to take out Japanese that had pole or satchel charges they used to blow the track off the tanks. Once we had to take out a pillbox with a flame-thrower. We laid down a base of fire for the flame-thrower operator as he crawled up and sent his flame into the pillbox. He thought he got the pillbox and started to walk back toward us. They were still alive, though, and as he was walking back, they set up their machine gun, opened up on him and shot the heels right off his boots! He was lucky to get back, but he was madder than hell since his boots were brand new! The next day he went up again with us in support and he stuck the nozzle right into the hole in the pillbox. He made sure he got them.

Q: What was a pole charge?

JP: Apparently the Japanese did not have a weapon comparable to a bazooka. A pole charge was used against tanks. It was an explosive charge tied on the end of a pole. I don't know how they set it off, it must have had a plunger type detonator. They would run up to the side of the tank and try to hit the drivers and bogies of the tank to disable it. It was pretty much a suicide weapon.

Q: What were the Japanese tactics during this campaign?

JP: They were in retreat. I found afterwards that their orders were to pull back into the mountains. They had an area picked out in the most rugged mountains in the northern part of the island. They conducted mainly delaying actions as they pulled back to the mountains. In the Central Plains, they would pick certain towns out and defend them with a small number of troops armed with automatic weapons. In the hills, they would do the same thing, they would pick out some defensible high ground and put in four to six automatic weapons with crews to man them. They could hold off a battalion for, well… almost indefinitely. They were dug in so well that bombing or artillery didn't seem to phase them.

Q: What kind of weapons did they have?

JP: For heavy weapons they had mountain guns, mostly 75mm. They also had 120mm mortars and their knee mortar. They were good with them and they got the most out of them. They could wreak a lot of havoc. They didn't have a great deal of artillery and no air power at all. Their automatic weapons were Nambu light machine guns. They had two kinds of rifles. There was a .25 caliber rifle and the more elite units were armed with heavier rifle… about a .31 caliber with a heavier punch that was comparable to our .30 caliber Garand. There were few Japanese that were really good shots. Those that were good were used as snipers. They could raise havoc, but for the most part, the Japanese soldiers were poor shots. They were also tired, sick and they didn't have enough food to really fight effectively.

Q: Did you ever see a Japanese prisoner?

JP: Only once really, and that was before we got into the really heavy part in the mountains. It was down in the valley at a hospital. Somebody had picked him up and brought him there, I suppose to treat and question him. He was lying out in the sun and they took their time before treating him. There wasn't a great deal of sympathy for him.

Q: Did anyone ever consider being taken prisoner as a practical course of action?

JP: NO!! There were too many instances, even on Luzon, where the Japanese didn't take prisoners. In fact, on one occasion, I know they killed our wounded. A medic driving a jeep full of wounded soldiers made a wrong turn and drove into a Japanese position. They killed him and bayoneted the wounded as they lay on their litters. Hospital and aide men didn't mean anything to them so there was no thought of surrendering to them under any circumstances.

Q: Did you see any Japanese tanks?

JP: Yes, they had a light tank but there wasn't much to it. In the Central Plains at the town of Binalonan, there was a tank that had apparently been bypassed or overrun. We saw this tank break out and it was coming down the road at us. The Antitank Section got on him and hit him, stopping it dead. Two of the crew came out of the hatch as the tank burned. Everybody shot at them but one guy escaped. He jumped off and ran into the cane field. It was wonder we didn't kill each other. We'd ringed the tank and everybody on all sides started shooting. The Filipinos got him that night. They tortured him all night long and brought us his head in the morning. They didn't take any prisoners, either. We also saw tanks in our first big firefight. The regiment was moving to take the town of the Umingan and the I&R platoon was conducting reconnaissance in front. We held up at a small village called Pimienta and waited for a rifle company to clear the village before moving in. We didn't even bother to dig in. We started getting contact about 4:30 in the afternoon. By 8:00 that night, Japanese tanks and artillery joined the fight. We were located near the battalion command post and I could hear the battalion commander calling for artillery. First he contacted Division headquarters, then he called on the radio asking for his "Uncle Ira" at Corps headquarters. Apparently, "Uncle Ira" was a high

ranking member of I Corps. Soon, a Piper Cub came over to spot the artillery. Since it was a bright moonlit night, the pilot could see the situation. I heard the pilot yell over the radio, "here it comes!" and suddenly all the artillery in the world hit the Japanese at once. They had 105's, Long Toms, 75's… everything. The fight lasted until 4:00 in the morning but the artillery had destroyed the Japanese tanks. We were sent in the next morning to check the results. The Japanese column had been blown to pieces by the artillery.

Q: did you ever work with American tanks?

JP: I worked with a tank one time when we went up a ridge line to where we thought a machine gun was located. This tank rolled up and instead of going after the machine gun nest, the damn tank came after us with machine gun fire. He started to swing his big gun around and kept raking up and down the ridge with the machine gun. Miller, one of the guys from the squad, went down there, climbed up on the tank and pounded on the hatch with his rifle butt calling for the commander to come out. He told him that if he didn't come out, he'd start shooting through the slit. We never found out who screwed up.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Philippine population?

JP: We had four Filipinos assigned to us. We got them about the second week we were on the island. Their names were Del, Greg, Ruffino and one other I can't remember. We signed them up, paid them a dollar a day and gave them a uniform. Del was assigned to our squad. He was a Philippine Scout who was on Bataan, surrendered there and was on the Death March. He was able to escape and spent time in the mountains on the Bataan peninsula until the invasion when he came out. He was good in the jungle, he was good anyplace. He knew what was up and knew what to do. The other one, Greg, you had to watch because the Japanese had killed most of his family. He was really wild and he would go after the Japanese. Ruffino, he was there for the dollar a day. He had a real knack for figuring out when something was going to happen, then he had to go home because his caribou was sick. We also had carrying parties of local tribesmen when we got up into the mountains. The Igorods would bring up ammunition, water, and other supplies for us. They were really able to climb those hills. The women were better than the men at hauling things. Down in the Central Plains, once we got moving, there were few contacts with the populace. Either the Japanese had moved them out or they knew enough to get out of any areas where there might be any action.

Q: How much were you paid?

JP: I thing that at the time the basic pay was $30 or $50 a month plus you got combat and overseas pay which was $5 and $5. Also, I got Private First Class on Luzon so I think it was somewhat over $50 a month for me.

Q: Did you see the Japanese commit "Banzai" attacks or infiltrate at night?

JP: Yeah, outside the town of Pimienta they had a banzai attack. We didn't really get into it, the Antitank Section did. They were firing canister. Up in the mountains, when we took a hill called "The Scar," we had banzai attacks. We used so much artillery that it took off the top of the hill. It looked like a plowed field. There were also occasions when we had infiltrators. One night we had to go back and guard the artillery pieces along with a rifle company. It really rained hard that night. For some reason, somebody set off a flare. There must have been a hundred of them right in the middle of our position to order a banzai attack. They had fifty or more left and we cut them down. On another occasion, just above Balete Pass, we had set up a perimeter to guard the battalion command post. The Japanese tried to infiltrate there, too. We spent most of the night throwing grenades back and forth. We didn't fire because we couldn't see anything so we used grenades. This was good reconnaissance on their part. About three days later they put artillery in on us. They got the information they wanted and used it well.

Q: What about ambushes?

JP: There was one in particular. We went into a hill mass up in the mountains. We were crossing another stream. This was a fast stream, perhaps 10-20 yards wide. We were to cross it and go up this trail leading up into the mountains. We walked right into this ambush. There were six of us on the patrol and three of us were caught in the ambush. Del, the Philippine Scout, was walking behind the first three members of the patrol. He picked the Japanese up and kept telling me that, "They're over there! They're moving! Shoot them!" I remember thinking, "Hell, I can't see them!" He started shooting, then I started shooting, then a sergeant came up and threw a grenade in there. We kept getting return fire so we pulled out. We went back across the river and there was a platoon from a rifle company there that had a radio back to Battalion. We told them what we found and they said "Go back!" We asked them to put in some mortar, which they did. We went back in twice and still picked up fire. They had a heavy machine gun, two light machine guns, and 25 riflemen. We wouldn't have been able to handle them with six guys. We did have them pinpointed pretty good.

Q: Did you ever get a good fix on the enemy?

JP: There was one patrol that was really significant. We circumvented their main line of resistance. The 25th Division was stopped cold in Balete Pass. We hadn't moved fifty yards in thirty days. Earlier, we had great success using flanking movements. At places like Putlan and Digdig we did what we called the end-around. Up in the mountains we couldn't maneuver like that. I learned in later years that the regimental commander was looking for a way around the Japanese positions. He got into a Piper Cub and flew up the Cagayen Valley along Highway 5. He thought he saw a route where there was a possibility. He came back and gave our battalion and the Second Battalion a mission to send out patrols based on his suggestions. We went up this river all the way past the ridge lines that ran down to the road the Japanese had covered. We practically got into Balete Pass itself. On the way up, we could hear the Japanese off on the side talking. Also, I don't know if it was mess kits or what, but we could hear metal sounds as well. A

couple of days later, we led the whole battalion up the route. That time, we were almost up there and we spotted a Japanese soldier. He took off with us after him. I don't know to this day if anyone ever got him; we never found him. It was too late to do anything about it so we just kept going. We got up behind them and they discovered too late that their main line of resistance was breached in battalion force. Still, it was tough going for a while after that.

Q: How did you get wounded?

JP: We got up on some high ground near Balete Pass we called "Wolfhound Ridge." We could see the pass from up there. B company was just to the east. They had a sniper holed up in a cave. We came up behind to see if we could assist them. There were a number of Japanese in there, we had lost the Division XO, Brigadier General Dalton, the day before in that area. He had been shot in the head by a sniper. We went past the crest of Balete Pass some fifty yards beyond where we thought the cave was. B Company was coming the other way. B Company had a bazooka man who put a couple of rounds into the cave. It turned out the cave was an ammunition dump because the cave exploded and blew the whole side of the hill out. Flying rock from the explosion broke my leg and blew me into a ditch. A platoon from B Company was caught in a landslide caused by the explosion. I guess that two or three of them were buried alive and killed. When the rock stopped falling, I tried to get the hell out of there. I tried to get up and run, but I went down and tried again. That was the first time I realized something was wrong with me. One of the guys in the squad, Stanley A. Stanczyk came to help me. He grabbed hold of me and pulled me into a cave by the side of the road. Stan was my pinochle buddy and a weight lifter. He went on after the war to win a gold medal for weight lifting n the 1948 Olympics and the silver medal in the 1952 Olympics. After awhile, the battalion surgeon came down with some medics and put me in a jeep and took me to the Collecting Company and from there to the Clearing Company. I was put in a Piper Cub and flown out down to the Field Hospital down around Lingayen Gulf. I was evacuated from there to Leyte. I was out of the mountains on the same day I was wounded. Others weren't evacuated so quickly. The previous day a rifle company had gotten into trouble and they had a number of casualties. They asked for volunteers to help the medics as litter bearers to bring these guys in. The guy on the litter I had was shot in the head. We brought him back to battalion and they supposedly took him back from there on the trails. The next day, I got hurt and in the afternoon when I got in the ambulance, there he was on the floor of the ambulance. He was still alive, but it took them all that time to carry him down the trails to the road. They had to carry him by litter most of the night down those steep trails to the road. Of course, it was dark and they had to go slow to keep from running into anything.

Q: When did you find out the war was over?

JP: I was on the hospital ship. It was before Hawaii that the word came down that they had dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. There was rumor that the Japanese were going to surrender but the rumor was premature. In between Hawaii and San Francisco, the

second bomb was dropped. When we landed in San Francisco, we learned that they surrendered. They let people who were ambulatory out of Letterman Hospital to go into San Francisco. Things were so wild that people started to get hurt, so they canceled all leaves.

Q: How long were you in the hospital after you were wounded?

JP: From May 1945 until I was discharged in April 1946, so about 11 months. Strict hospitalization lasted probably 9 months. There was a period of rehabilitation where I had a little more freedom to get out on pass.

Q: How many casualties did your platoon suffer on Luzon?

JP: Out of our platoon, figuring 50-55 men, we lost 15-20. I know on one day they got First Sergeant Bernie Bernier, Sergeant Steve McDonough, Mendoza and a Lieutenant, I never knew his name. They were hit by an artillery treeburst right over our position. Steve McDonough was in the hole next to mine. At first light, I had to leave my foxhole because I had dysentry so bad. The rounds hit while I was gone. When I returned, I couldn't even recognize Steve. Over a period of five months, we lost somewhere in the neighborhood of 30%.

Q: In 1983 you went back to the Philippines. What were your thought and feelings during that visit?

JP: I think right up in Balete Pass I got a feeling of, not so much fear, but of anxiety. I remember so many things up there. Down on the Central Plains, the thing I couldn't get over was the number of people there. We saw very little of the people at the time. Now they're just overrun with people. I also got a kind of eerie feeling up in the mountains. You could feel the fear all over again.

Q: There's a monument to the 25th Division at the crest of Balete Pass about 200 yards from where you were wounded. What did you think about when you saw that?

JP: I thought about all the ones I knew that were either killed or wounded. I think that it was nice that the government at the time put a monument up there. To pick one division out of all that were on the island is quite an honor.